

Task-based Assessment of L2 Pragmatics:
Eliciting Authentic Suggestion Strategies in an EFL Context

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Abstract

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a thriving field within second language acquisition study. However, the role of assessment in ILP is troubled, with procedures that have been shown to produce inauthentic language use. The growth of task-based methodologies may provide an avenue for a new form of task-based pragmatic assessment. This study aims to investigate the use of a collaborative game task in eliciting naturalistic suggestion forms from English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. The task was used with four intact groups of EFL learners at different ages and different stages of proficiency, and the language obtained compared with role-play data. Results showed that students at all ages and levels used simpler and more direct language in the game task, although the changes were not uniform. It is proposed that the greater consequentiality of the game task caused the students to produce more authentic language samples. For pedagogical purposes, use of both task types may best assist teachers to judge their students' ILP development. For researchers, collaborative tasks may help elicit language subjects actually use, rather than what they think they might use.

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Task-based Assessment of L2 Pragmatics:

Eliciting Authentic Suggestion Strategies in an EFL Context

Pragmatics has been described as the study of ‘how-to-say-what-to-whom-when’ (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). It has risen in prominence as linguists have come to recognise that grammatical competence cannot be directly equated with successful communicative performance. It is the study of interactive language use in authentic context. Within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the focus of pragmatics research is Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). This is the study of the state and development of learners’ pragmatic perception and production. Difficulties arise, however, with the testing of pragmatic ability. Measurement of real language ability while in a classroom setting can be difficult because the context is unnatural. Common methods of pragmatic assessment, including role-plays and discourse completion tasks, lack authentic face-threatening consequences, and so may not reflect learners’ real world performance. On the other hand, unconstrained authentic discourse is unfocused and time-consuming to evaluate, making it difficult to focus on specific learning outcomes. Task-based teaching techniques, which require the use of meaningful language to overcome artificially constructed obstacles, may be an answer.

This research aims to investigate the use of a task-based method of eliciting pragmatic production for both research and pedagogical assessment purposes.

Interlanguage Pragmatics and Suggestions

Pragmatics is often separated into the categories of *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics* (Leech, 1983). Pragmalinguistics relates to the linguistic forms used for appropriate interaction, while sociopragmatics relates to the context in which interaction takes place. In order to communicate in a pragmatically appropriate manner, speakers require both linguistic resources and contextual awareness. As learners develop in new languages, they must learn both elements in

order to interact appropriately. Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is the study of the state and the development of learners' knowledge of these two elements in a second language (L2).

Research into ILP can be traced back to the late 1970s, where studies in Europe (Hackmann, 1977) and America (Borkin and Reinhart, 1978) investigated the perception and performance of speech acts by non-native speakers. The main focus of ILP research has been on speech acts, which is also the area covered by the present research. Speech act theory was initially advanced by Austin in 1962 and developed by Searle in 1969. Searle (1976) later divided 'illocutionary acts' into five categories: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations. The majority of ILP research has focused on those speech acts labelled directives - those where the objective of an utterance is to get another actor to do something.

One reason for this focus on directive acts is the prevalence in pragmatic research of politeness theory. Politeness theory "has to do with the addressee's expectations that the speaker will behave in situationally appropriate behaviour" (LoCastro, 2003, p.274). A key approach to politeness is the concept of face-saving (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which suggests that respect must be had for the self-worth, or 'face', of both speaker and addressee, and that appropriate levels of imposition - and therefore appropriate degrees of politeness strategy - vary depending on context, notably on the factors of social distance between speaker and addressee, the relative power of speaker and addressee, and the degree of imposition by the speaker on the addressee. Directives - as attempts to alter the behaviour of another actor - are naturally impositions, and therefore *face-threatening acts*, which require the use of various politeness strategies. The study of learners' understanding of both different levels of linguistic form for the same speech act (pragmalinguistics), as well as appropriate recognition of when those different forms should be used (sociopragmatics) is the basis for much ILP research.

In addition to politeness, other aspects which have been examined in ILP include transfer and proficiency. Studies have shown that grammatical proficiency does not necessarily correlate with pragmatic proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

One possible cause of pragmatic failure is transfer (Thomas, 1983; LoCastro, 2003, p. 253), however studies suggest that there may be a negative correlation between pragmatic transfer and proficiency (Maeshiba et. al., 1996; Rossiter and Kondoh, 2001). Bardovi Harlig and Vellenga (2012) found that non-native speakers used a more limited range of pragmatic forms than native speakers, while Hassall (2003) found that non-native speakers overused some pragmatic forms because of their prevalence in EFL textbooks.

Among directive forms, the request has been most studied. However, fewer studies have looked at the realisation of suggestions by non-native speakers. Studies examining the use and development of such speech act are particularly relevant to the current research, which also investigates suggestions.

One of the earliest studies on suggestions is that of Rintell (1979), who studied Spanish students' requests and suggestions in both Spanish and English. Through means of role-plays, she found that, for suggestions, both age and sex of the addressee altered the levels of deference in English, though not in Spanish. Later, Banerjee and Carrell (1988) compared Chinese and Malay ESL students to native English speakers using a discourse completion task designed to elicit suggestions. They found that native speakers made suggestions more frequently than non-native speakers, and that the form of suggestion changed depending on context. In line with this, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) compared the development of native and grammatically-proficient non-native English speakers' use of suggestions and rejections during academic advising sessions at a university. They found that non-native speakers developed their sociopragmatic awareness over the course of the term - recognising appropriate contexts for suggestions - but not in pragmalinguistics - continuing to use quite different – and less appropriate – suggestion forms than native speakers. The authors attribute this partly to insufficient models of suggestion forms, as academic advisory sessions are by nature private. As for perception of speech act realisation, Hinkel (1994) studied the perceptions of native and non-native English speakers as to when and in what forms suggestions were appropriate. She found that while both groups evaluated social distance similarly, non-natives made

different judgments about when and how it was appropriate to give advice. Interestingly, she found that these judgments of appropriateness differed by first language - speakers of Spanish and Arabic behaved significantly differently from speakers of Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Koike (1996) studied learners of Spanish in their understanding of speech acts (four out of seven of which were suggestions) when the L2 form was similar to L1, but their intent was different. She found that more proficient learners were more able to recognise the intent of speech act, but that learners at all levels of proficiency showed signs of transfer, and needed contextualised language to develop their sociopragmatic competence. Continuing this point, Alcón (2001) followed up on Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1993) study by investigating 15 Spanish students in an ESL setting of academic advising sessions. She found that despite having input from teachers, students continued to use inappropriate suggestion forms, and concluded that exposure alone is not enough to develop pragmatic competence, but pedagogical intervention is required. Matsumura conducted a pair of studies examining pragmatic development of advice acts for L1 Japanese learners of English. In her 2001 study she found that the sociopragmatic awareness of students in an ESL setting developed more rapidly than for those in an EFL setting. In her 2003 study, focusing on the ESL setting, she found that amount of exposure was more influential in sociopragmatic development than length of stay or general proficiency.

Martínez-Flor produced a number of studies focusing on the effects of different teaching strategies on EFL learners' production of suggestion forms. Following a small study in 2003, her 2004 doctoral dissertation compared the effects of explicit versus implicit teaching of L2 suggestion forms over the course of a semester to Spanish EFL learners. She found that both forms of instruction were similarly effective in increasing learners' awareness of appropriate suggestion forms and their actual production of suggestion forms. These findings were also represented in Martínez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) and Martínez-Flor and Alcón (2007). Her work is particularly important for this research because of her development of a taxonomy of suggestion forms, also presented in Martínez-Flor (2005). Her work has spawned several similar studies from Iranian scholars who

have utilised her taxonomy. Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) used her classifications to investigate which suggestion strategies were being used by L1 Persian EFL learners, finding that there were significant differences as compared to native English speakers. Rajabi and Farahian (2013) found that both explicit and implicit teaching of suggestion forms improved pragmatic awareness and production for Iranian EFL learners, in line with Martínez-Flor's findings. Similarly, Rezvani et. al. (2014) found that both explicit and implicit teaching of suggestion forms improved pragmatic production for Iranian EFL learners. Chalak and Abbasi (2015) found additionally that a combination of explicit and implicit teaching techniques was more effective than using either separately in improving production of appropriate suggestion forms. Ghavamnia et. al. (2014) investigated four types of input enhanced teaching of suggestion forms, finding that all were effective, but 'form comparison' and 'metapragmatic explanation' were the most effective at developing appropriate suggestion production.

Elsewhere, Santos and Silva (2008) investigated native speakers, heritage learners, and non-heritage learners of Portuguese in their production of suggestion forms in the workplace, finding that non-heritage learners were less flexible in their use of forms, which they suggest is a function of underdeveloped sociopragmatic awareness. In a different context, Li (2010) compared high-school aged Cantonese EFL learners in both L1 and L2 with high-school aged Australian native English speakers. He finds that the interlanguage pragmatics of the Cantonese speakers are different from their L1 pragmatics and from native English pragmatics. In particular, he found that the students reluctance to be misinterpreted and desire to be polite caused them to employ a smaller range of strategies - predominantly explicit conventionalised forms. From a longitudinal perspective, Liu and Wang (2012) examined the development of suggestion strategies for a Chinese doctoral student at an American university over a semester. They found that he used similar pragmalinguistic forms at the start and end of the semester, but his sociopragmatic awareness had increased, changing the relative frequency of the forms to a more appropriate balance. A corpus-based approach was utilised by Gu (2014) to investigate the differences between Chinese EFL learners and native English

speakers in their production of suggestion forms, finding that the learners used significantly more modal verbs, explicit performatives, and conditional structures, and significantly fewer interrogatives and inclusive structures than the native speakers. He suggests that these differences can be ascribed to students' sparse exposure to authentic English, and the failures of textbooks to provide contextualised and authentic examples.

It can be seen that investigation of awareness and production of pragmatic suggestion forms for language learners has been accelerating in recent years. These have looked at setting, developmental patterns, and the effects of instruction. However, a difficulty remains both from research and teaching perspectives, in the question of how pragmatic knowledge and development should be tested.

Pragmatic Assessment

Most scholarship on pragmatic assessment comes from the point of view of the researcher, rather than the teacher. Kasper and Rose (2002) list nine possible methods of pragmatic data collection, divided into three subcategories. Spoken interaction includes Authentic Discourse, Elicited Conversation, and Role Play. Questionnaires includes Discourse Completion tasks (DCTs), Multiple-Choice questions, and Scaled-Response Questionnaires. Oral and Written Self-Report includes Interviews, Think-Aloud Protocols, and Diaries. Two of the most used are DCTs and role-plays.

DCTs are a form of questionnaire where the participant is provided with a situation and a prompt, and must provide what they believe to be an appropriate response. These can be administered as oral or written tests. They have several benefits, notably being easy to vary for the purposes of research and easy to administer - particularly in written form. Written DCTs allow a large amount of data to be quickly (and simultaneously) collected, with short written responses that can be easily analysed.

Role-plays are a common classroom technique where two (or more) participants are given a scenario and roles to play, and they have a conversation as though they were really those characters in the context. Role-plays can be open or closed. Closed role-plays are tightly constrained, often giving one participant a script to read while the other responds. This is, in fact, very similar to an oral DCT. Open role-plays allow the participants more freedom in their conversations. The advantage of a role-play is that it is a more natural way to produce spoken language than writing down an imagined oral response, and open role-plays allow analysis of sequences of language, not just individual utterances.

However, several studies have shown that neither of these techniques produces particularly authentic language use - the very thing that is being tested. Yuan (2001), for instance, showed that language used in written and oral DCTs was significantly different from real language use as recorded in field notes, although he concluded that oral DCTs were closer to natural language and may be sufficient for some investigations. Similarly, Turnbull (2001) compared written DCT, oral DCT, role-play, experimental data gathering, and genuine conversations for the type of language they produced. He describes the ideal method of data collection being one in which the research has a high degree of control over the eliciting situation, but a low degree of control on the elicited response. Experimental data gathering was his attempt to find a new solution - students were given the opportunity to participate in a study, then later they were called to arrange a time to undertake the study, but in fact, the call to arrange a time and their response to it *was* the study. After recording their responses, the experiment was explained to the participants and their permission was obtained to use the data. He found that language use was very different comparing the DCTs with the role-plays and experimental techniques, and that the latter two were more like real speech. He also found that in role-plays, participants were over-eager to respond, and sought to extend the conversations unnaturally, presumably in an attempt to please the researcher. He therefore suggested that, where possible, his experimental technique was the best option for obtaining authentic pragmatic language. Similarly, Al-Gahtani (2010) found that role-plays elicited more pragmalinguistic forms than were used in natural language, which he

ascribed to the desire to communicate messages in a clear and simple manner in natural talk, while role-plays allowed the opportunity to focus on form rather than meaning. In line with this, Félix-Brasdefer (2010) investigated DCTs, role-plays, and verbal reports for refusals. He too finds that language use is significantly different between DCTs and role-plays, and suggests this is a result of the online/offline processing differences between the two tasks, and that as long as this is kept in mind, either could be a useful data collection technique. He also suggests that for either method, triangulation of participants language use should be obtained through follow-up interviews, where participants can explain why they used the language they did.

Some researchers have considered the idea of testing and instruments more broadly. Golato (2003) created a written DCT based on recordings of natural 'talk-in-interaction' for accepting or rejecting compliments, and found that language use was significantly different in the DCT. She described them as being "better suited to the study of 'what people think they would say' than to the study of 'what people actually do say' in a given speech setting." (p.111) due to their metapragmatic, offline processing nature. She also criticises other forms of pragmatic assessment, including role-plays, saying that while they do have features similar to naturally occurring language, there are significant difficulties, such as the lack of real-world consequences from the interaction and the positioning of the subject in roles with which they may be unfamiliar. She suggests that moves towards a conversational analysis based approach to data collection and analysis are a positive trend for pragmatic researchers. Roever (2011) also argues that none of the commonly used data elicitation techniques appropriately capture authentic language, and a broader construct of pragmatic ability needs to be tested - going beyond individual speech acts to aspects of rich context and sequential organisation. He developed an online testing battery (2014) as an attempt to measure this broader construct. He also states that while role-plays strike a balance between representativeness and feasibility, more investigation needs to be done on how to standardise measurement of individual ability as separate from the conversation itself. This last point is echoed by Gilabert, Barón, and Levkina (2011), who found

that proficiency differences between speakers were neutralised in dialogic tasks due to the influence of the interlocutor.

Tasks and Pragmatics

One underutilised possibility for pragmatic ability testing is the use of tasks. Task-Based Language Teaching has become an extremely popular form of communicative language teaching since its popularisation by Prabhu in 1987. Ellis (2003) defines tasks as having the following features: 1) they are planned rather than spontaneous, 2) they have a primary focus on meaning, seeking to “engage users in using language pragmatically rather than displaying language” (p.9), 3) they are authentic, involving real-world processes of language use, 4) they may involve productive or receptive skills or both, 5) they engage cognitive processes, providing contextual framing (but not prescription) for language use, and 6) they have a clearly defined communicative outcome. This production or perception of authentic contextualised language suggests the suitability of tasks as methods of assessment. While it could be argued that role-plays are examples of tasks, they remain inauthentic, because the goals are those of the task-designer rather than the speakers, and they lack any real consequence for the speakers (Golato, 2003, pp.93-94).

Some recent examples can be found utilising tasks as a method of pragmatic assessment, led by Naoko Taguchi and YouJin Kim. Taguchi and Kim (2014) used a collaborative dialogue writing task based around request forms with Korean high school ESL learners. It was found that students involved in collaborative tasks were more likely to engage in pragmatically focused language related episodes, and that those pragmatic-related episodes were more likely to be resolved successfully, than for students working individually while thinking aloud. They also used a DCT to test pragmatic development and found that students working collaboratively gained a short-term advantage in their request productions. Investigating simple and complex versions of the collaborative dialogue writing task (Kim and Taguchi, 2016), they found that more cognitively complex tasks elicited a greater amount of interaction between learners than did more cognitively simple tasks. However, they also found that these pragmatic-related episodes were only

increased for contextual (sociopragmatic) elements, and not for pragmalinguistic forms. That the students in the complex task group discussed contextual features more is perhaps not surprising when one considers that their method of making the task more complex was to remove the contextual descriptions of the images the students were being asked to write about. Additionally, while they found that cognitive complexity altered student behaviour, they did not find any effect of pragmalinguistic complexity on student behaviour.

The study of task complexity is a research field in itself. Most research is based on the effects of task complexity on language complexity, accuracy, and fluency, following either Foster and Skehan's (1996) Trade-off model or Robinson's (2001) Cognition Hypothesis. Included in this topic is measurement of lexical complexity, which may be related to pragmalinguistic knowledge. Gilabert, Barón, and Levkina (2011) found that lexical diversity increased in some forms of complex task, but not others, as participants had to justify or over-explain their decisions and instructions. Similarly, Michel (2011) found that making a task more complex by manipulating the number of elements led to greater lexical diversity for both L1 and L2 speakers.

Fewer researchers have investigated the effects of task complexity on sociopragmatic awareness or appropriateness. Taguchi (2007) found that manipulating politeness variables of social distance, power, and level of imposition led to a decrease in appropriateness of pragmatic forms used, an effect she suggested was due to insufficient pragmalinguistic resources. Gilabert and Barón (2013) investigated the effects of task complexity on the use of pragmatic moves, and found that task complexity increased the number of pragmatic moves used, but not the variety. Task type, however, was found to influence the type of pragmatic structures utilised by the participants. Kim and Taguchi (2015) found that increasing complexity by increasing reasoning demands in a collaborative writing task did not affect the quality of task performance, but did increase metalinguistic discussion of pragmatic elements, leading to longer term retention of the target pragmalinguistic forms.

The use of tasks as pragmatic testing devices remains underexplored. Problems exist with other forms of pragmatic data elicitation, such as DCTs, role-plays, and natural conversation. Complex collaborative tasks appear to provide language samples that are both authentic and focused. They also provide opportunities to assess sequences of interaction, rather than individual decontextualised utterances. This research aims to further our knowledge of the effectiveness of task-based assessment of pragmatics.

Research Questions

Collaborative tasks may be a useful method of pragmatic assessment that overcomes many of the problems which plague other data collection methods. This would require that tasks are able to elicit targeted pragmatic structures, rather than simply unfocused language. Tasks would also need to elicit demonstrably different language forms than traditional assessment methods to indicate that the assessment type creates a different – hopefully more authentic – setting for students' pragmatic performance. With this in mind, this study investigates the following questions:

- 1) How well do collaborative tasks elicit specific and predictable pragmatic language samples?
- 2) Does the language elicited by collaborative tasks differ from that elicited by role-plays?

Methodology

Participants

Thirty-seven English Language learners were included in the study, spread across four different groups. Group A comprised eleven students (4 male, 7 female, age 14) who were studying at a language academy at B1 Level. All spoke Spanish and Catalan as their first languages. Group B comprised twelve students (4 male, 8 female, ages 18-21, mean 19.8) who were studying English as part of their

university undergraduate degrees at around C1 level. All but one spoke Spanish and Catalan as their first languages - one spoke only Spanish as her first language. Group C comprised six students (1 male, 5 female, ages 22-26, mean 23.6) who were studying English as part of their university postgraduate degrees at around B2 level. All spoke Spanish as their first language. Group D comprised eight students (0 male, 8 female, ages 30-50, mean 39.5) who were studying English optionally at their workplace at around C2 level. All spoke Spanish and Catalan as their first language. This information is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Participants

<u>Group</u>	<u>n.</u>	<u>Mean age</u>	<u>Level</u>
A	11	14	Intermediate (B1)
B	12	19.8	Upper-Intermediate (C1)
C	6	23.6	Intermediate (B2)
D	8	39.5	Advanced (C2)

Materials

The primary research material used in this study was the board game Forbidden Island (see Figure 1 below), designed by Matt Leacock and first published by Gamewright Games in 2010. This is a co-operative game where the players win or lose together. The players take on the role of explorers who have discovered a mysterious island containing four treasures. The object of the game is for the players to work together to collect the treasures then escape the island on their helicopter. Unfortunately, the island is cursed, and begins sinking as soon as anyone sets foot upon it, providing an increasing challenge to the explorers. In abstract design terms, players are presented with four possible verbs - move, turn over, give, or capture - and must decide on which combination of three verbs they should choose on each turn. The combination, priority, method, and object(s) of those verbs are the player's

choice. Success requires teamwork, and therefore strategies and plans for each player's turns are discussed by the group.

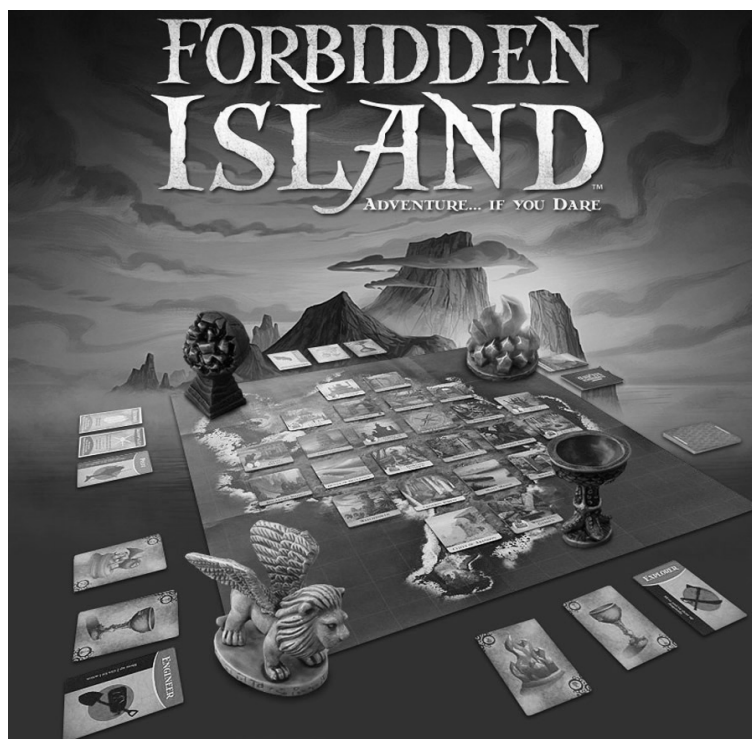


Figure 1. Components of Forbidden Island.

Games are authentic, in that native speakers equally and identically place the artificial constraints of the game rules upon themselves as a fun challenge. This makes the game task equivalent between learners and native speakers, both acting under genuine artificial constraints with similar stakes and language requirements. On the other hand, as there is a specific objective and the game rules prescribe restrictions as to how that objective may be achieved, target language areas used by participants should be predictably focused.

This particular game was chosen for its relative simplicity, attractive visual design, and co-operative nature. This makes it simple to teach in a classroom, easy for participants to connect with, and likely to produce suggestion forms. It is also relatively inexpensive and well known to researchers. All copies of the game used were identical English versions of the game.

Additionally, a simple open role-play was used. One of the pair had found a wallet in the street, containing no identification cards, but €2000. They were asked to discuss together what they should do with the wallet and the money. The role-play format was chosen due to its widespread use as a method of obtaining ‘authentic’ language from learners.

Despite the relative simplicity of the game, it is obviously far more cognitively complex than the role-play. Considering some complexity elements from Robinson’s Cognition Hypothesis (2005), the game task has both increased reasoning demands and an increased number of elements. Additionally, while there is an overarching objective (escape the sinking island with the treasures), many smaller objectives can be identified within the whole (e.g. collect four of the same card, stop the important tiles from sinking), which could be considered as increasing the complexity along the scale of \pm single task. The number of interacting participants was also greater in the game task. On the other hand, interactional factors were largely kept the same between the two tasks - both being open, two-way speech production tasks with familiar peers.

Data Collection Procedures

Pilot testing of the procedures and materials were carried out with 12 students similar in situation to group A, and two students similar in situation to group D. All groups tested followed the same procedure. The groups were tested in their classrooms during regular class time.

First the participants were asked to perform the role-play in pairs. Instructions were given orally by the researcher. All pairs carried out their role-plays simultaneously. In each group, up to three pairs were recorded, and their discussions transcribed for analysis.

Next, participants were asked to play the game Forbidden Island. The game was taught by the researcher using a powerpoint presentation to explain the rules and give examples. Following pilot testing, the game pieces were set up in front of the participants before the presentation, allowing them to connect the

presentation images with the game pieces more concretely. Participants were then split into groups of three or four and asked to play the game. The researcher was available to answer questions and assist while participants played the game. No external time pressure was applied. All groups were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Group D followed a slightly different procedure. As several students needed to leave early, they instead played one game as four pairs instead of four individuals.

Measures

In order to analyse the data, the transcriptions of both the role-plays and the games were examined in order to find all the occasions when the participants had used suggestion forms. These suggestion forms were then coded using the scheme from Martínez-Flor (2004).

Developed as part of her Ph.D. project on the effect of instruction on the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language settings, Martínez-Flor's suggestion taxonomy is the most thorough categorisation of suggestions currently available. It was created based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and in particular focusing on *on-record* and *off-record* pragmatic forms. The scheme has three tiers: type, strategy, and linguistic form. *On-record* forms have been categorised under the type 'Direct', while *off-record* forms have been categorised under the type 'Indirect'. Another type recognised by the scheme is 'Conventionalised Forms', based on the work of Banerjee and Carrell (1988). Conventionalised forms fit between direct and indirect suggestions; they are described as indirect utterances that are conventionally used in such a way that they are clearly understood as though they were direct utterances. Finally, a fourth type, labelled 'Other', was added based on examples found in the data which did not fit into the three prior categories. Each of these types was split into several second-tier strategies (14 in total), with the strategies divided into numerous third-tier linguistic forms.

Where Martínez-Flor's scheme did not cover particular suggestion forms present in the transcriptions, new categories were added. The updated taxonomy used for coding purposes is included as Appendix A.

One role-play transcript and one game transcript were also coded by an interrater then compared together to determine the scheme's suitability and ensure that it was being applied appropriately. As both tasks were 'open', inasmuch as the participants were free to answer in any way they chose, and with long stretches of interaction, several important coding practices were developed as a result of this interrater process.

Planning was not coded as suggestion, so "I could go there" was not considered a suggestion in the data, whereas "You could go there" was considered to be a suggestion. This includes where a plan is clearly intended to solicit suggestions, for example when it ends with a rising inflection indicating uncertainty - this was still not counted as a suggestion.

Additionally, rule clarifications between the players were not counted as suggestions. These distinctions were made by context, so for example:

S1: Can I go here?

S2: Yes, you can move there because you are the explorer.

was not counted as a suggestion form, whereas:

S1: You can go here and get that treasure

was counted as a suggestion form - despite having identical linguistic forms, context demonstrates that one is a clarification of what a participant is allowed to do under the rules of the game, while the second is a suggestion of what the participant might do to help advance the participants' position within the game.

Suggestions did not have to be completed to be counted, so:

S1: You could go...

S2: I need another card

was counted as a suggestion form from student 1, despite the interruption preventing the first student from completing the thought.

Additionally, suggestions that were immediately repeated by the same participant were counted as one suggestion instance, rather than multiple instances, so:

S1: Send me... send me... send me a cup, send me a cup

was counted as one direct imperative suggestion, rather than four separate suggestions.

Both the role-play and the game task encouraged complicity between participants, leading to a sizeable number of ‘inclusive WE’ suggestions, i.e. ‘We can get this treasure soon’ rather than ‘You can get this treasure soon’. Consequently, suggestions that would fall into Martínez-Flor’s ‘Inclusive WE’ categories have been collapsed into their equivalent direct categories for the purposes of this research. The only exception was for the use of ‘let’s’:

S1: So let’s get going and leave

which does not easily fit within any non-inclusive category.

Finally, although in every group there were examples of participants reverting to Catalan or Spanish at times, these were not examined for suggestion forms, as the focus of this research was the use of pragmatic forms by language learners, and as Martínez-Flor’s Suggestion scheme is written specifically to categorise English pragmatic forms. So:

S1: *Esperar*, listen listen

was counted as one direct imperative suggestion.

New Strategies

Several new categories not covered by Martínez-Flor’s scheme were found in the data, and have been added to an updated version of the scheme

(Appendix A). These include four of the broad second-tier strategy categories, as well as a moderate number of third-tier ‘linguistic form’ categories, which follow particular grammatical forms.

The first of the new strategies are interrogative possibilities. These are conventionalised forms that combine elements of both interrogatives and possibility modals.

S1: Do we have any way of....?

or

S1: Can you give her two cards?

At least 5 different linguistic forms of this strategy are recognised. Arguably, this category could also include positive forms with question tags, such as:

S1: You could move here, couldn’t you?

When discussing coding agreements, Martínez-Flor (2004, p.469) states that negative questions (e.g. ‘Can’t you...?’) would be added as linguistic forms within their equivalent affirmative strategies (i.e. Possibility/Probability). However, these linguistic forms are not present in her final taxonomy, presumably because they were not present in her data. For the updated scheme, these kind of interrogative possibilities are considered an alternative strategy.

Another new strategy is the use of the passive form to give indirect suggestions. This is quite different grammatically from the ‘indirect impersonal’ category already present in the scheme. The passive form focuses on the action that might be taken, directing attention away from the imposition on the person who might take the action. A number of different modal verbs can be used, but each is considered to fall under the same strategy:

S1: This one could be turned over

S2: This one needs to be turned

are examples of two linguistic forms of this new strategy.

The next is the ‘will’ form. This bears some similarity to several of the extant conventionalised forms (e.g. ‘you should’, or ‘you need to’), as well as to the obligation forms (e.g. ‘you must’, ‘you have to’). However, none completely captured the use of the modal ‘will’ as a suggestion form, which implies such certainty in the suggestion that a consequent plan can be suggested at the same time. Although only one example of this suggestion form was found in the data:

S2: Because now is your turn, you will take the...

it nevertheless has been included as a new category within the ‘other’ type, as it clearly does not fit into any other strategy.

The final added strategy is the ‘request suggestion’. Requests are, obviously, their own category of pragmatic speech act. However, the boundary between these two forms is not always clear cut, particularly as both are directive speech acts where the intention of the speaker is to cause the listener to take some form of action. One theoretical distinction between the two is that the action following a request benefits the speaker, while the action following a suggestion benefits the addressee. In the game task used in this research, the interests of the speaker and addressee usually aligned. In the data, participants occasionally used request forms to suggest a course of action. Almost all of these were in the form of imperative + please, e.g.:

S1: Move here please.

Arguably, this could be categorised as an imperative suggestion with a request tag added on as a downgrading modifier, but given the status of requests it is considered that these request suggestions were deployed by participants as a suggestion strategy, and therefore should be included in the scheme.

New Forms

Examples were also discovered in the data of specific linguistic forms of suggestion to be added into pre-existing strategies in the Suggestion scheme.

3(B) Third Person Conditional Imperative e.g. "he gives me the card"

This form is an imperative statement about a third person, generally used as the first part of a suggestion, and could have been stated as a piece of conditional advice (i.e. "If he gives you the card, you can capture that treasure"). This category may well have occurred during the game task in a way that would not normally appear in a role-play dialogue due to the existence of multiple collaborators.

4(B) Simple Negative Imperative e.g. "no no no"

This is a difficult category, and could easily be considered a rejection rather than a suggestion. However, in the same way that other negative forms can be either rejections (e.g. S1: "Should I keep the money?" S2: "No, you shouldn't") or suggestions (e.g. "S1: What shall I do with this money?" S2: "Well, you shouldn't give it to the police"), so too can a simple, "no no no". Generally, 'no' was considered a rejection when given in response to a plan (e.g. S1: "I could move here" S2: "No no no") but a suggestion when given in response to an action (e.g. S1: "I go here and here" S2: "No no no").

6(G) Elided Modal e.g. "We give it to the police"

Relatively frequently the participants expressed their suggestions in ungrammatical forms, the most common of which was an elided modal sentence - where it is to be assumed that the word 'can' or 'could' has simply been missed out from the structure. This occurred frequently enough in the data to justify being given its own category. Without doing so it would be unclear whether these statements should be placed under 'imperative' (which they technically are) despite that not being the subject's intention, or under 'can' or 'could' - either of which might be the subject's intention, but it cannot be ascertained which.

12(CC) Impersonal Interrogative Possibility e.g. "Is it possible to...?"

This is a special form of indirect suggestion, following the form of an impersonal interrogative possibility (discussed above). It is possible that this ought

to be a separate strategical category, but for now, with only one observed instance, it has been added to the long list of other indirect impersonal forms.

6(I) Third Person Could e.g. "He could take it"

Martínez-Flor's original scheme lists 'they can' as a separate linguistic form from 'you can' and 'they should' separate from 'you should'. For the sake of consistency, a third person 'could' category has been added distinct from the 'you could' category.

Finally, a number of new categories were also adapted for the 'inclusive WE' strategy e.g. "we have to".

Results

For the purposes of analysis, identified suggestion forms were grouped by the strategy tier of the suggestion scheme rather than the fine-grained linguistic forms tier, so 'you can...' and 'you could...' are both treated as being of one category ('conventionalised forms possibility/probability'), rather than as two separate forms within that category.

Role-play

In the role-play, each group produced an average of 8.1 suggestions. The higher proficiency groups (B and D) each produced more suggestions than the lower proficiency groups. The higher proficiency groups also produced a slightly greater number of unique suggestion strategies than the lower proficiency groups. Overall, 21 unique suggestion strategies were observed, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Suggestions per group - role-play

	<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Group C</u>	<u>Group D</u>	<u>Total</u>
Av. number of suggestions per group	6	10.66	6.5	9	8.1
Unique forms of suggestion	3	8	6	7	21

As shown in Figure 2, the dominant strategy used across all groups for the role-play was ‘possibility/probability’, making up 47.6% of all suggestions given. Within that strategy, the use of ‘can’ was clearly dominant, making up 35.4% of all suggestions given. Only for Group D was this not the dominant strategy, producing 5 instances of ‘possibility/probability’, but 6 ‘conditional’ strategies (e.g. ‘If I were you...’). ‘conditional’ (12.2%) and ‘should’ (13.4%) strategies were the only other strategies used more than 10% of the time overall. Within groups (as seen in Figure 3, below), Group A used ‘obligation’ strategies 11.1% of the time, and Group D used ‘impersonal’ strategies 15.8% of the time.

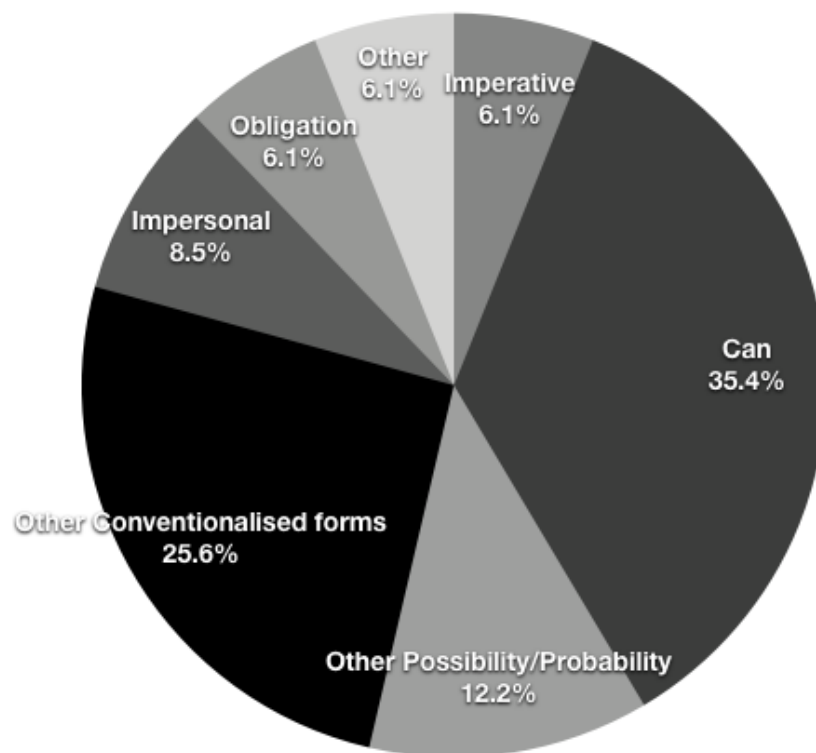


Figure 2. Suggestion strategies used in the role-play.

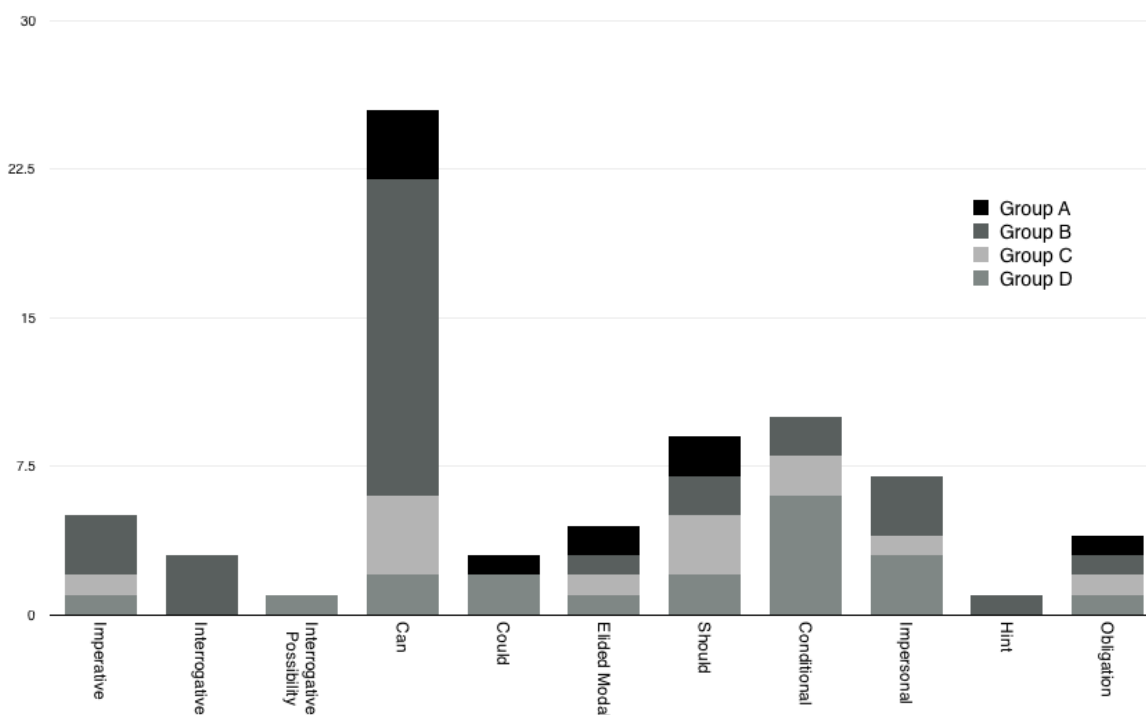


Figure 3. Suggestion strategies used in the role-play, separated by group.

Game task

In the game task, each group produced an average of 88.38 suggestions, and 34 different suggestion strategies were observed. Interestingly, Group A produced the most suggestions on average - this was largely due to a heavy reliance on imperative forms. The participants from Group C produced far fewer suggestions than those in the other groups, and correspondingly utilised notably fewer suggestion strategies (see Table 3 for summary of results).

Table 3

Suggestions per group - game task

	<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Group C</u>	<u>Group D</u>	<u>Total</u>
Av. number of suggestions per group	125.5	83	30	115	88.38
Unique forms of suggestion	20	21	10	16	34

As shown in Figure 4, ‘Possibility/probability’ remained a dominant strategy across all groups, making up 35.5% of all suggestions, and being the prevailing strategy used by three of the four groups. Within the ‘possibility/probability’ category, again ‘can’ stood out most prominently, comprising 32.6% of all suggestions. Group A were the only ones to have a different dominant strategy, the use of imperatives. 53% of Group A’s suggestions used the ‘imperative’ or ‘negative imperative’ strategies, compared with just 27.9% of ‘possibility/probability’. It is worth noting that the ‘imperative’ and ‘negative imperative’ strategies combined make up 38% of all suggestions across the four groups - slightly higher than ‘possibility/probability’. This is almost entirely driven by Group A - with them removed, the two combined ‘imperative’ strategies fall to 21.5%, while ‘probability/possibility’ rises to 43.9%. The only other strategy utilised

more than 10% of the time overall was ‘obligation’ at 11.3%. Figure 5 shows the strategies used by each separate group. Notably, within Group B ‘need’ was used 13.3% of the time, and in Group D ‘impersonal’ strategies were used 13% of the time.

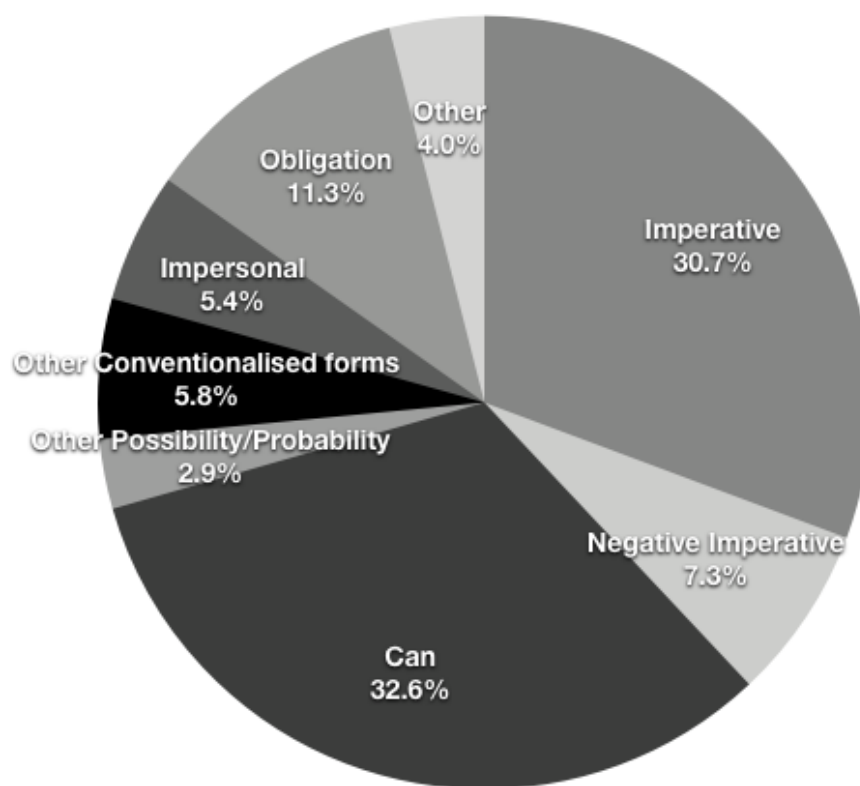


Figure 4. Suggestion strategies used in the game task.

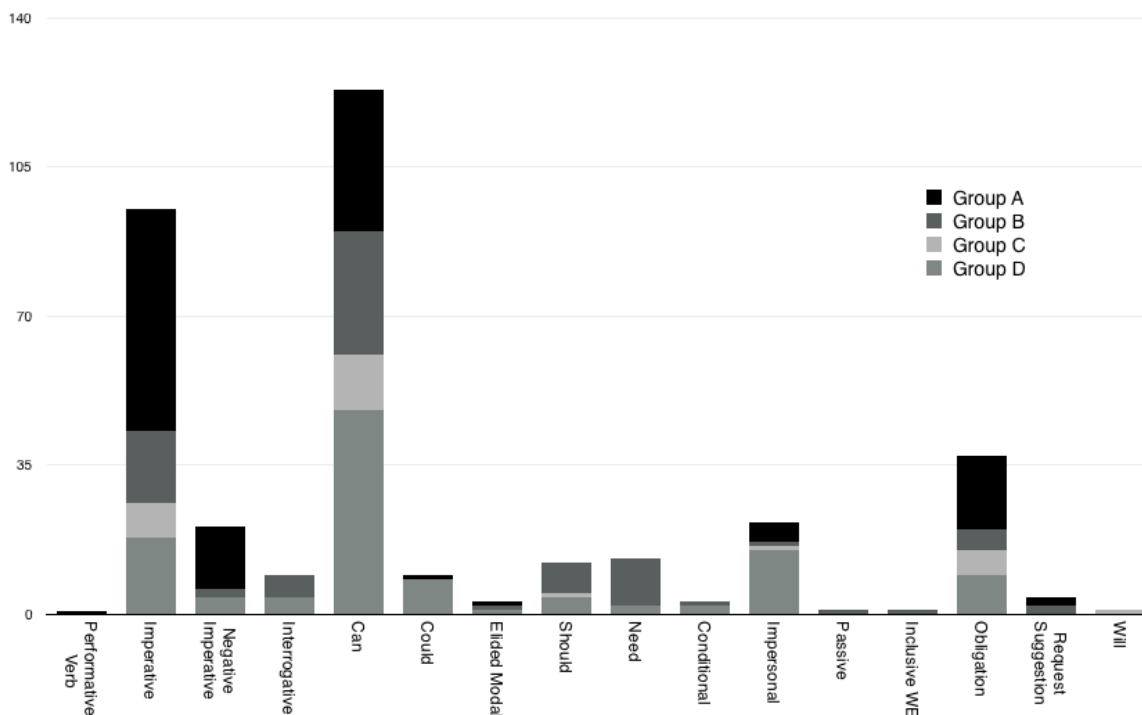


Figure 5. Suggestion strategies used in the game task, separated by group.

The difference between language use is even starker when looking beyond the numbers of individual pragmatic acts and into the sequences of interaction.

Sample from Group A

S4: So me, it's my turn, no?

S1: [Name] go get here and save it

S4: I come here and I save this

S1: And this

S3: And this one for one action

S1: No no no, and this and this and this , this this this this this

S2: Si, this

S1: Look look look,

S4: No *es mia*, one...

S1: You were here, you were here no no no no no no

S4: Two and three

S1: [Name] no [Name] no no

S4: Yes yes yes

S2: No no no

S4: Yes yes

S1: No, [Name] *mira* [explanation in catalan]

Here, student 1 is particularly confident about the course of action he wants student 4 to take. His suggestion strategy revolves around imperatives and repetition, which earns him repeated denials in response. Eventually, he becomes frustrated with the failure of his simple English strategy to convince student 4, and switches to Catalan to justify his reasoning.

Sample from Group D

S1: And it's not better to fly to a place where you have a treasure?

S2: No because you have not the treasures yet

S3: No I don't have the cards, I can't

S1: No no no no no but if to deflood it

S3: Ah yes, to ensure that they will be available when we get them

Group D's language use is much more complex and polite. Again, student 1 is suggesting a plan to student 3. Student one makes her suggestion indirectly, as a question, then explains her reasoning, which convinces student 3 of the benefits of the plan. While student 1 does use a repeated 'no', it is as a means of indicating a misunderstanding, rather than rejecting anyone else's ideas.

Comparisons

In both the role-play and game tasks, 'possibility/probability' strategies, and within that 'can' in particular, were dominant. In fact, 'can' became more dominant in the game task, moving from being 74.4% of all 'possibility/probability' strategies in the role-play to 91.8% in the game task. However, the distribution of other strategies changes drastically between the two task types. Obviously, there is the explosion of imperatives in the game task - increasing to 38% from 6.1% in the

role-plays. Although Group A was most influential in this regard, even with them removed there is a 352% increase in use of imperatives by the other three groups (from 6.1% to 21.5%). Contrarily, the more complex ‘conditional’ strategies drop almost to nonexistence - from 12.2% in the role-plays to 0.6% in the game task. Similarly, the use of ‘should’ plummets from 13.4% in the role-play to just 2.5% in the game task. ‘Obligation’ strategies almost double in use, from 6.1% in the role-plays to 11.3% in the game task.

Group D is notable for being the only group to use a substantial number of ‘indirect’ strategies, and doing so across both tasks - 15.8% of all suggestions in the role-plays and 13% in the game task. Group B also used a moderate amount of these strategies in the role-play (9.4%), but this fell to 1.2% in the game task. Group A had 9 instances (3.6%) of ‘indirect’ strategy use, but every single one of them was the same participant using the same form ‘it’s better to...’.

Interestingly, one example was found in the data of a hint - a suggestion form so elusive in L2 speakers that, although included in Martínez-Flor’s scheme as a strategy, had no instances or examples. This came with one of group B’s role-plays, when the first student was describing holding a large party at a club with the money she had found, and the second student said:

S2: I prefer more personal friends.

as a way of hinting that a smaller party might be a good idea instead. This instance has been added to the updated suggestion scheme as an example.

One common feature of language use was the appearance of a kind of repetition effect. Pragmatic forms would be introduced by one student, then picked up and used by other students, who had until that time shown no inclination toward those forms.

Sample from Group A

S3: Oi Cave of Shadows ooh

S2: We can... We have to save that

S3: I have sandbags, eh, so maybe

S2: Ok em

S4: I can move three times, like?

S2: Yes

S4: Ehm, I save this

S1: Um, but you have to no no you can't ok, you're the this

S4: Ah

S3: Hmm

S2: Yes save

S1: Save

S2: And

S1: You can save that if you want. No no, that doesn't important

S4: I save that

S1: It doesn't matter

S4: No I save that

S3: No you can't, you have to move here

S2: You're right you're right

S3: No you can't

Here, student 2 is worried about a tile on the island which is about to sink, and says "We have to save that". The obligation form 'have to' had not been used in this group for more than 5 minutes at this point. However, almost immediately student 1 uses the form, and a few lines later, so does student 3. Student 2 has 'infected' the group with the obligation form, and the others pick up the form and repeat it. This pattern is repeated among all the groups to some extent. This would not have occurred without interaction, nor is it likely to have been noticed without sequence analysis of the interaction.

Individual Differences

Undoubtedly, individual differences in the personalities of the speakers influenced the amount and type of suggestion forms used. Confident speakers, particularly those who more easily comprehended the rules of the game, were much

more likely to make suggestions to the other participants, and were more likely to use direct suggestions, such as imperatives. This is true of native speakers when playing co-operative games as well, and is known as the ‘alpha-gamer problem’, where one player makes all the decisions, and might as well just be playing all the roles themselves. On the other hand, more timid participants were much more likely to use modifiers when making suggestions, make more indirect suggestions, and directly solicit suggestions from others. This could be seen both in the role plays and the game tasks. Often during the game task they would state their lack of understanding, and ask the researcher open-ended questions about the task (e.g. “what do I do?”). More confident students would also ask the researcher questions, but generally with a much more specific focus (e.g. “Do all actions have to be different?”).

Feedback

Students were also asked for their feedback on the tasks, and the game task in particular. Almost all of the comments were very positive about the use of this more complex and time-consuming task in class, saying things like:

S1: [I like the game task more because it’s] more interactive and you have to think of an estrategy^(sic) and then you have to do it

S2: It's ok because you have to talk and have to advise and yes

These suggest that learners felt a genuine desire to succeed at the game, and recognised the need to collaborate with other students during the task. Another student stated:

S3: I’m gonna buy it

upon winning the game with her group. Whether or not she followed through on that impulse, it showed her enjoyment of and connection to the game.

Where there were negative comments about the game task, it tended to be concerning its complexity, particularly at the start of the activity. For example:

S4: Many rules, but, to memorise

Despite being relatively simple for a modern board game, the task nonetheless had many more variables than a traditional classroom activity. This complexity and unfamiliarity may well cause more cautious behaviour and speech for some students, reducing its value as a natural language gathering tool. On the other hand, this reaction is probably learner dependent, as another participant almost immediately responded:

S5: This is not as complicated as the games that [my friends] play

Discussion

The choice of suggestion strategies appear to be influenced by a number of different factors, including task type, proficiency, and age.

Clear differences are observed across the two task types. Though a greater number of suggestion forms were present in the game task than the role play, this may be partly explained by the amount of time on task - the role-plays took between 3 and 6 minutes, while the game tasks took between 25 and 40 minutes. Nevertheless, despite more forms being used, the forms were distributed less evenly, with a much increased concentration of simpler types. Imperatives and 'can' grew from just over one-third of all suggestions to just over two-thirds of all suggestions. This demonstrates that students were more likely to use simple linguistic forms with the game task. This may be related to the different consequences of the tasks. Choosing whether or not to keep an imaginary wallet full of cash may be an interesting thought exercise, but it is ultimately inconsequential (Golato, 2003). On the other hand, winning or losing a game is a genuine consequence which, though minor, activates the psychological desire to succeed, as can be seen in some of the students' reactions. This adds a level of authenticity to the game task situation that is not present in the role-play. It may be, then, that students take the time to focus on form during role-plays, but change focus to clarity and efficiency when faced with the more consequential game task (Al-Gahtani, 2010).

In the role-play, the two higher proficiency groups produced a wider variety of suggestion strategies than the lower proficiency groups. However, this pattern did not extend to the game task, where Group A overtook Group D for unique suggestion strategies used. A possible explanation for this may be found in the unusual circumstances of Group D's data collection session, where one game was played by eight students, while Group A had three separate games played by four students each. As we have seen, particular linguistic forms were picked up and used by multiple participants after being introduced by a single participant. With additional people in the game, each participant had relatively less talking time, and therefore may not have had the opportunity to inject other forms.

This repetition effect, where introduced forms are picked up and utilised by other members of the group is an interesting occurrence which would not have been observed without the use of an assessment mechanism that recognised sequential interaction. This may be a weak form of pragmatics-related episode (Taguchi and Kim, 2014), where rather than actively discussing what forms to use, forms are recognised and recalled during interaction. This demonstrates the benefits of collective learning rather than individual (Gilabert, Barón, and Levkina, 2011).

Age appears to have a greater effect on suggestion strategies than proficiency. In the role-play, the use of conditional forms increased nearly linearly with age. The oldest group was also by far the most likely to use indirect suggestion forms in both the role-play and the game task. Although all groups became more direct in the game task, this effect was most pronounced in the youngest group. As both Spanish and English prefer indirect strategies for face-threatening acts (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003), one possible explanation for this is that these younger learners might simply be generally less sociopragmatically aware, focusing more on task completion than on the relative impoliteness of the language forms. This view is supported by a brief inspection of Group A's Catalan turns, which were also predominantly comprised of imperative forms.

Conclusions

Returning to the research questions, in answer to the first question, we can argue that collaborative tasks do seem to elicit specific and predictable pragmatic language samples. It was expected that the game task would elicit suggestion forms, and so it transpired. In answer to the second research question, again, we find that there appear to be differences in the language forms elicited by the game task as opposed to the role-play. As discussed above, this appears to be a move towards more authentic language use due to the increased consequences of the task type.

Implications

The role-plays encouraged a greater number of students to use a wider variety of forms. Their inconsequentiality allowed the learners to focus on the form of their suggestions. The game task, although eliciting an overall greater number of unique suggestion forms, nonetheless concentrated those forms into predominantly simple forms of imperatives and ‘can’ structures. It appears that the learners at all levels have pragmalinguistic forms, but in the more naturalistic game task neither the pragmalinguistics nor the sociopragmatic aspects are reflected.

Role-plays, then, seem to be useful methods of practising targeted pragmalinguistic forms in the classroom. Their cognitively online nature forces participants to internalise the use of targeted forms. However, this likely will not reflect real performance. Learners need more authentic opportunities to practice in the classroom to prepare them for real interactions. Tasks can provide context and consequence that allow learners to demonstrate how they would use pragmatic strategies in the real world, and therefore allow teachers to assess students’ real progress. They are also particularly valuable in foreign language learning contexts where authentic language use situations are harder to come by. Pedagogically, both task types probably have a role to play in the classroom. Game tasks without role-plays may not provide sufficient development opportunities, while role-plays without game tasks may provide the teacher with an incomplete picture of their students’ pragmatic development.

From a research perspective, this study once again highlights that, while role-plays elicit pragmatic performance, this does not seem to reflect how participants would actually behave in real – or simply more complex – situations. The design or selection of collaborative tasks to elicit particular pragmatic acts may be challenging, and especially to do so in a way that allows the researcher to manipulate particular variables such as social distance, relative power, and degree of imposition. Nonetheless, the addition of even the minor consequence of winning or losing a game as a team does appear to push participants to engage in more authentically representative language. This makes collaborative tasks a good option for classroom-based research into authentic pragmatic language use.

One clear difficulty with role-plays and tasks is that both require substantial effort to evaluate language use, nearly on par with natural language evaluation. It seems unavoidable that assessment of language in interaction will be more onerous than simply monitoring for the appearance of decontextualised pragmatic forms.

Limitations

Some notes of caution are to be sounded about these results, particularly due to the relatively small sample size. A maximum of twelve students were investigated in each group. This makes raw numbers incomparable between the groups - recording data from more participants will inevitably yield more language use, but this may not be proportionately more than a group with fewer participants. Additionally, all groups were intact EFL classes. No investigation was made into what (if any) pragmatic elements had been previously taught to those classes. These potential group differences are unaccounted for in this analysis.

The group demographics also make it difficult to disentangle the effects of age and proficiency. While there are older and younger high and low proficiency students included, proficiency was not specifically tested in any group, and the age groups themselves are not easily comparable. For example, the younger low proficiency group were high-school aged, while the younger high proficiency group

were university undergraduates. These difficulties were unavoidable due to limited availability of participants, but nevertheless must be recognised as a limitation.

It is similarly difficult to separate the effects of task type and task complexity. There was no ‘complex’ role-play, nor a ‘simple’ game task. The two tasks were of vastly dissimilar length. While reference to previous studies suggests some features that may be related to type or complexity, it is problematic to specifically describe changes in language use as being the result of one thing or the other. It also meant raw numbers could not be usefully compared. We might expect greater numbers of pragmatic acts but equivalent numbers of pragmatic strategies in a more complex task (Gilabert and Barón, 2003), but the sheer volume of additional data in the game task may be masking this effect. In addition, the role-plays had only two participants (or occasionally three), whereas in the game task there were four participants (or occasionally three). This generally increased competition for turn-taking during the game task, which could have been a confounding reason for the increased use of direct imperative forms.

This is also related to the specific difficulties with Group D, where the participants schedules required them to play the one game in four pairs, instead of two groups of four taking on an individual role each. This likely further increased competition for talk time, but also may have allowed more timid students to ‘hide’ and not contribute.

Individual differences, such as timid or confident personalities did appear to play a role in language use. Without a detailed investigation of each student’s individual background and personality, only very limited observations could be made regarding the effects of these individual differences.

Some experimental design decisions also may have had negative effects on the research. With a limited number of participating groups, counterbalancing the task order was impossible, but may have led to a practice effect for suggestion forms. Without the use of a control group, it is impossible to compare the language used by learners to a native-speaker benchmark. This could have been particularly valuable

from a sociopragmatic perspective of what kind of suggestion strategies were appropriate in the different situations.

Due to time constraints, suggestion modifiers were coded, but not analysed. Most studies relating to suggestion forms have found valuable results from investigating the use of modifiers, and it is likely that the data from this research would also yield further interesting information from this kind of further investigation.

Opportunities for further research

Additional studies focusing on tasks as ILP assessment methods would be welcome. Greater numbers of participants could corroborate the findings of this research, particularly if task counterbalancing is used. Obtaining data from specific demographic groups that allow for confident intergroup comparison – for example the separation of age from proficiency – would also be highly beneficial. A study which compared student language use in the game task to native language use in the same task would also provide useful and interesting data. Conversely, pragmatic transfer might be investigated by comparing pragmatic language use when undertaking the task in students' L1s compared to in their L2s.

Individual differences looked as though they played a role in language use, and a more detailed study of which individual traits – personality, aptitude, etc. – created particular effects would be a useful and novel contribution to the field.

Analysis could also be made of different task types, or tasks focusing of different pragmatic acts. This could also attempt to unpick the effects of task type from those of task complexity in the area of collaborative game tasks. Structural complexity of language used may also be a profitable avenue to explore, based on the interactions found in this data.

A final thing to note is that there was no treatment for any of the groups. Had there been explicit teaching of suggestion forms we might have expected to see more of the taught target forms. However, the intent of this research was to see what

they knew and how they used it in different tasks – the state of their ILP – rather than testing the efficacy of any particular treatment type. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of game tasks at measuring pragmatic development.

Final remarks

Task-based pragmatic assessment methods appear to hold promise. In this study the game task successfully elicited the targeted speech act, and the suggestion forms obtained through the game task were different from those obtained by a more traditional role-play. It is suggested that the consequential objective of winning the game prompted students to focus on clarity of meaning, rather than form, giving rise to more simple and direct linguistic forms. This likely better reflects real world performance. Pedagogically, we can conclude that a combination of the techniques will allow teachers to more accurately assess their students' pragmatic knowledge and development – the role-play for pragmalinguistic forms, and the game task for authentic sociopragmatic context. From a research perspective, this provides further evidence that role-plays do not provide naturalistic speech data, and adds collaborative tasks to the short list of more promising pragmatic data collection alternatives.

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Appendix A

Taxonomy of suggestion forms. Adapted from Martínez-Flor (2004). Additions in bold.

Type	Strategy	Linguistic Forms
Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Direct	(1) Performative Verb	(A) I (would) suggest that you ...
		(B) I (would) advise you to ...
		(C) I (would) recommend that you ...
		(D) I (would) recommend you to ...
		(E) I (would) recommend you + noun
		(F) I would like to suggest (advice, recommend) ...
		(G) I would recommend you + that-clause
		(H) *I suggest you to study ...
		(I) I would suggest you + V-ing ...
		(J) If you want to ..., I'll suggest + noun
		(K) I wanted to recommend you...
		(L) I recommend + noun
		(M) I can suggest to you + that-clause (S+V)
		(N) I suggest that (S+V)
		(O) I would recommend that we ...
		(P) I (would) suggest you + a noun
		(Q) I can recommend you + a noun
		(R) I suggest + a noun
		(S) I (would) suggest to you to ...
		(T) I (would) suggest you + that-clause
		(U) *I suggest to V
	(2) My + a noun of suggestion + be-verb	(A) My suggestion (to you) would be / is ...
		(B) My advice (to you) would be / is ...
		(C) My recommendation (to you) would be / is ...
		(D) My idea is that you could ...
		(E) My opinion about ...
		(F) Another suggestion is about

		...
		(G) My idea is to ...
		(H) My opinion is ...
	(3) Imperative	(A) Try using ...; Take my advice; Send your CV; (B) He gives...; She moves here...
	(4) Negative Imperative	(A) Don't try to... (B) No no no
Conventionalised Forms	(5) Specific Formulae (interrogative forms)	(A) Why don't you ...?
		(B) Have you tried ...?
		(C) Have you thought of ...?
		(D) How about ...?
		(E) What about ...?
	(6) Possibility/Probabilty	(A) You can ...
		(B) You could ...
		(C) You might want to...
		(D) You might ...
		(E) You may ...
		(F) You may want to ...
		(G) You give it to the police... (modal elided)
		(H) They can ...
		(I) They could...
	(7) Interrogative Possibility	(A) Can you...?
		(B) Can't you...?
		(C) Could you...?
		(D) Couldn't you...?
		(E) Do you have any way of...?
	(8) Should	(A) You should ...
(B) You ought to ...		
(C) You had better ...		
(E) They should ...		
(9) Need	(A) You need ...	
	(B) What you need (to do) is ...	
(10) Will	(A) You will...	
(11) Conditional	(A) If I were you, I would ...	
	(B) If I were in your position, I wouldn't ...	
Indirect	(12) Impersonal	(A) It would be helpful if you...
		(B) It might be better to ...
		(C) A good idea would be ...
		(D) It would be a good idea to ...
		(E) A subject + would be a good idea.
		(F) It would be nice if you...
		(G) One possibility would be ...
		(H) One thing (you can do)

would be to ...
(I) There are a number of options that you...
(J) It could be good to ...
(K) This is a good possibility/option ...
(L) It should be nice ...
(M) It would be a good place to ...
(N) It would be good if ...
(O) It might be good to ...
(P) A subject + is better (than ...)
(Q) A subject + is a better option (than ...)
(R) A subject + would be better (than ...)
(S) A subject + would be a better option (than ...)
(T) A better + a subject + be-verb
(U) The best + noun
(V) It is better to ...
(W) *That is good to ...
(Y) A subject + that might be better ...
(Z) It would be helpful to ...
(AA) *It could to have ...
(AB) (it) will be better if ...
(AC) It is better that you ...
(AD) The first (second, third) idea is ..."
(AE) The solution would be ...
(AF) It is a nice idea
(AG) A great idea ... would be ...
(AH) It can be a good idea ...
(AI) It would be great to ...
(AJ) A good reason is ...
(AK) subject + could do it better
(AL) A noun + be + the best option
(AM) subject + will be more ...
(AN) A subject + is more (than ...)
(AO) *It is to be recommended ...
(AP) subject + will be a good idea
(AQ) * a good idea be ...
(AR) a subject + must be more ...
(AS) A noun + be + the best idea
(AT) a subject + should be more

		...
		(AU) a subject + is/are cheaper than ...
		(AV) the subject + that clause (that I enjoyed the most) ...
		(AW) subject + would be the ideal ...
		(AY) one idea is ...
		(AZ) it is a good manner to ...
		(BA) a good + a noun + would be ...
		(BB) The better we can do is ...
		(BC) It could be a good idea/choice/activity to ...
		(BD) It could be + a noun
		(BE) subject + would be helpful for + noun
		(BF) It is better that ...
		(BG) a good ... could be ...
		(BH) the most + subject + is ...
		(BI) subject + will be better ...
		(BJ) subject + be + the most ...
		(BK) subject + is the best
		(BL) subject + could be
		(BM) it would be a good suggestion + V-ing
		(BN) it would be better you + V
		(BO) It might be better if ...
		(BP) It will be a good idea ...
		(BQ) *the better ... will be ...
		(BR) It would be better to ...
		(BS) subject + would be a good option
		(BT) it can be interesting ...
		(BU) it must be interesting ...
		(BV) subject + would be a great idea
		(BW) other option would be ...
		(BY) it would be a good activity ...
		(BZ) subject + has/have more + a noun (than) ...
		(CA) subject + would be helpful
		(CB) other good idea is ...
		(CC) is it possible to...?
	(13) Passive	(A) ... can be done
		(B) ... could be done
		(C) ... should be done
		(D) ... needs to be done

		(E) ... has to be done
	(14) Hints	(A) I prefer more personal friends.
Others	(15) Inclusive WE	(A) We can ...
		(B) We could ...
		(C) Shall we ...?
		(D) Let's ...
		(E) We'd better (not) ...
		(F) We should ...
		(G) We need ...
		(H) We will ...
		(I) We would ...
		(J) We might ...
		(K) We must ...
		(L) Why don't we change ...?
		(M) We give it to the police... (elided modal)
		(N) We have to...
		(O) Can we...?
		(P) Could we...?
		(Q) Should we...?
		(R) Do we have any way of...?
	(16) Obligation	(A) You must ...
		(B) You have to ...
		(C) You must not ... (prohibition)
	(17) Request suggestion	(A) Go here please.